

# The Chi Initiative: A behaviour change initiative to reduce the demand for rhino horn in Viet Nam

Susie Offord-Woolley

Managing Director, Save the Rhino International, Long Lane, London, SE1  
email: Susie@savetherhino.org

## Background

Rhino poaching has escalated sharply in recent years. We have seen an increase of around 9,000% since 2008, due to the high demand for rhino horn in some Asian countries. Wildlife crime affects the economic development of some of the poorest countries, as well as being responsible for threatening the survival of many species including rhinos (Nellemann et al. 2014). Modelling by the IUCN SSC's African Rhino Specialist Group's Scientific Officer shows that black (*Diceros bicornis*) and white (*Ceratotherium simum*) rhino mortalities (natural plus poaching) may have exceeded rhino births in 2016–17. Official poaching and natural mortality statistics, and breeding performance records, are needed from each rhino range state before this can be confirmed. If rhino poaching continues to accelerate, then all the successes made in these species' recovery may be reversed; pushing African rhinos to higher levels of threat on the IUCN Red List.

Viet Nam has been identified as a key consumer and trafficking country for rhino horn (Milliken and Shaw 2012). The country accounted for some 20% of the rhino horns seized between 2010 and 2015 (Emslie et al. 2016) and remains the primary end-use destination for rhino horn (CITES 2016); making it a primary focus for demand reduction work.

## The Chi Initiative

In 2014, TRAFFIC in Viet Nam together with Save the Rhino International (SRI) launched the Chi Initiative, one of the largest demand-reduction initiatives in Viet Nam, funded by the UK Government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and several other donors. The Chi campaign is an evidence-based social marketing approach that was developed using TRAFFIC's 5-step

behaviour change methodology. The first two steps are to identify behaviours and segment the audience to develop messaging. The third step involves modelling behaviour and understanding the best way to influence the audience. The final steps are the development and implementation of the social marketing initiative, followed by monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the campaign. Below is a description of the Chi initiative's development and delivery.

### *Identify target audience*

In 2013, TRAFFIC in Viet Nam commissioned Ipsos to carry out quantitative and qualitative research into rhino horn consumers (TRAFFIC and WWF 2013). 720 individuals from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) were surveyed with 5% of those surveyed admitting to buying or consuming rhino horn. The research identified three distinct rhino horn consumer groups; the most prolific (i.e. the one consuming most rhino horn) of these is referred to as "Mr L". The archetypal profile of Mr L is a wealthy urban male living in Hanoi or HCMC, aged 35 to 55, and married. Mr L cares about his health and prefers natural products. He enjoys being seen as a leader at work, within his community, and among his friends. Importantly, he doesn't care about the extinction of rhinos; rhino horn is simply a luxury consumer product. Mr L uses rhino horn to impress his peers and superiors in his networks, showing off his status and wealth; the supposed health benefits are less important to him (TRAFFIC and WWF 2013).

### *Develop appropriate messaging and test*

The project employed a social marketing agency to develop messaging using insights into the archetypal consumer, Mr L, including drivers and motivations for consuming rhino horn. The implementing team visited high-end coffee shops to approach, screen and recruit appropriate participants to take part in focus groups. A total of 10 to 12 participants attended each of the focus group discussions in Hanoi and HCMC to provide

their feedback on several initiative options. The chosen initiative revolves around the Vietnamese concept of Chi, or 'strength of will'. The initiative uses positive messaging that has been found to be more effective in behaviour change activities (TRAFFIC 2016). The messaging promotes the idea that success, masculinity and good fortune come from an individual's internal strength of character, rather than being acquired externally from a piece of horn.

### *Key influencers / behaviour modelling*

The target audience's perception of the messenger is integral in determining how successfully the message is received. Is the message from someone that the consumer respects and trusts? Mr L is unlikely to listen to messages put out by conservation NGOs, as they are perceived as having ulterior motives for promoting such messages (TRAFFIC 2016). It is therefore important to understand who is most able to influence the target audience. The Chi Initiative secured support from influential Vietnamese opinion leaders and companies. It has the support of five government departments including the Ministry of Health, Central Committee for Propaganda Education (CCPE), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI). All these organisations hold powerful sway over different segments of Vietnamese society. Since Viet Nam is a communist country, it is particularly important to have the support of CCPE, as this ministry controls all government sanctioned messaging, while the VCCI is a key influencer among Vietnamese businesses.

### *Deliver messages*

An 18-month marketing plan was developed by the social marketing agency to deliver the message in a wide range of formats, including 70 outdoor billboards placed in prominent places in Hanoi and HCMC that Mr L typically frequents, such as tennis courts. Chi messaging was featured in the magazines Mr L likes to read, including Forbes Vietnam, Golf Today and Robb Report Vietnam. Cards were placed in Vietnam Airlines' business lounges, while Chi messaging was placed in a one-page editorial piece in the airline's inflight magazine, Heritage. A website was launched to

engage Mr L in more in-depth discussions about Chi and the misconceptions about rhino horn use. Advertising banners were placed on newspaper websites popular with businessmen. In the second phase of banner promotion, Google AdWord pay-per-click was used to increase the visibility of the microsite. This strategy put the microsite as one of the first hits when male residents of Hanoi or HCMC searched using the keyword(s) 'rhino horn' and/or 'detox'.

Print and video advertisements were also placed at luxury car shops, high-end jewellery, and electronics retailers. A short film was developed featuring three famous and influential Vietnamese business leaders who publicly pledged zero-tolerance attitudes to rhino horn consumption. The film was published on the Chi website and shown at events. Chi messaging was displayed at golf events, CEO dinners and forums, and business conferences such as the Vietnam Business Association / Hanoi-HCMC Stock Exchange conference.

A marketing campaign can be expensive, especially when trying to reach a wealthy target audience. Therefore, a key focus in delivering the Chi message was to establish partnerships with organisations that could disseminate the campaign through their own existing networks.

The initiative aimed to reinforce the message that Chi is part of good business practice and incorporate this concept into companies' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitments. A CSR guide for environmental protection was produced to engage business leaders in adopting responsible practices; including adhering to a zero-tolerance approach to wildlife consumption. TRAFFIC in Vietnam and VCCI provided guidance to large, well-known companies in Vietnam on how to include wildlife protection into their existing CSR practices. VCCI has continued to roll out best practice in corporate ethics and consumer behaviour change, as well as a zero-tolerance approach to wildlife consumption through its own business events and networks.

The Viet Nam Post and Telecommunications agency became the first state-owned enterprise to support a nation-wide initiative to protect wildlife by incorporating Chi into its policies. CCPE displayed Chi messages at major Vietnamese airports and organised two propaganda conferences in Hanoi and HCMC to deliver the zero-tolerance approach to rhino horn consumption to more than 600 propagandists nationwide.

TRAFFIC has forged and nurtured strong relationships with many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). CSOs act as 'servant bodies' to different interest groups in society; through them, the public's concerns are compiled and

reflected back to the government. At the same time, CSO communities have strong internal networks; thus their social influence can increase the pressure on organisations to address wildlife crime and on individuals to change their behaviour.

These relationships were key for the dissemination of the Chi message. To date, Chi has reached over 21 million Vietnamese people; two million of which fit the target demographic consumer (Figure 1; see colour plates: page viii).

### *Evaluate impact and refine*

Campaign messaging and activities were continuously monitored so the marketing plan could be adapted based on results. For example, when trying to introduce the CSR guide for environmental protection in businesses, it was necessary to broaden the message as feedback suggested that rhino horn consumption was too narrow a topic for businesses to integrate into their operations. Another change was to make the messaging on airline postcards simpler for readers to understand. The reach of each communication was measured and adapted if it wasn't achieving its goals; for example, the AdWords were adapted to increase hits on the microsite.

Monitoring was conducted at all Chi-branded events by recording the number of participants and, when appropriate, their contact details were captured. Interviews and Knowledge Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys on the consumption of rhino horn were carried out on a sample of attendees. The campaign placement plan was updated every two months following evaluation of the activities and consulting a Technical Advisory Group for input into specific activities.

To date, TRAFFIC has completed two consumer surveys. The first survey, carried out in 2013, found that 5% of the people surveyed admitted to buying or consuming rhino horn and identified their motivations for using it, as described above. The second survey sampled 608 high-income urban men. Of this number, 444 were selected through random sampling. 27.7% of the selected sample reported that they had consumed rhino horn in the past. Insights from this research were used to refine the next stages of the Chi campaign and measure any changes in attitude. The research has not been published but the reports show that the Chi initiative shows promising signs of progress. The Internet,

word of mouth, television and billboards were the main sources of information remembered by respondents who recalled Chi. There was evidence of altered attitudes among Mr L, with 64% of survey participants saying they would recommend that colleagues, peers, family and friends do not consume rhino horn. This is a promising 'net promoter score', which provides a measure of the extent to which the survey's respondents are attitudinally prepared to recommend the new behaviour, i.e. non-consumption of rhino horn, to their peers, colleagues, family and friends. It is also a sign that Chi's 'mixed methods' approach is achieving resonance, not just reach.

The Chi initiative is not at the stage where it is possible to measure changes in behaviour—or their impact on rhino poaching. Both consumer surveys had relatively small sample sizes, making it difficult to robustly measure a change in behaviour of consumers in Viet Nam. Also as people become more aware that rhino horn is illegal, this adds another layer of complexity when attempting to attribute impact, i.e. to determine the extent to which changes measured are a result of the campaign. At the time of writing this paper, TRAFFIC has completed a third survey and is compiling the results. TRAFFIC is also working to establish measures to cross-triangulate consumer demand and poaching, as well as supply in the market, to provide a robust indicator of changes in wildlife crime and demand.

### **Conclusion**

As the Chi initiative has been so well received by its target audience and by project partners, it is now in a second phase of the initiative, with future phases being planned.

In order to substantially reduce the demand for endangered wildlife products, the conservation community needs to ensure that every initiative is having an impact. It is vital that initiatives share lessons learned and best practices with each other so that we can deliver even more effective behaviour change campaigns. The Chi Initiative's pioneering behaviour change approach has created a wealth of knowledge that can be used for other campaigns. Some key lessons learned are:

#### *Follow a recognised social marketing methodology*

This adds more time and cost to an initiative but it ensures that the campaign is more impactful. Many previous campaigns have shown images of poached rhinos or put out messages around rhino extinction, but the research showed that these messages do not resonate

with Mr L; he has no empathy for rhinos and does not feel he is responsible for poaching in Africa. Messages need to be shared by key influencers and so it was important to remove any NGO logos from materials and focus on champions within the government and business community, rather than using celebrities.

### *Utilise partnership networks*

The success of the Chi Initiative, in terms of its reach, is the result of working with influential partners, including key government departments. The importance of partnerships with key actors should not be underestimated when planning similar behaviour change approaches, nor the length of time required to establish them.

### *Carry out ongoing monitoring*

The messaging and activities in the initiative were monitored and adjusted several times throughout the campaign based on feedback. This helped to refine messages and enhance the impact of the campaign.

### *Do not view the campaign in isolation*

A target audience does not view a social marketing campaign in isolation from other activities. This needs to be taken into consideration when developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the campaign. Several other rhino demand reduction projects were being implemented at the same time as the Chi Initiative and far more information about rhino poaching and the rhino horn trade now appears on a regular basis in the press. All of these factors may influence consumer survey results and need to be taken into consideration when evaluating the impact of the campaign.

## **Acknowledgements**

I thank Trinh Nguyen, Senior Program Officer and Madelon Willemsen, Head of Office, TRAFFIC in Viet Nam for their help in preparing this article. More details about the Chi Initiative and other behaviour change campaigns can be found on the Wildlife Consumer Behaviour Change resource centre <http://www.changewildlifeconsumers.org/>

## **References**

CITES. 2016. Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species. Document prepared by the CITES Secretariat, on the basis of document CoP17 Doc. 18.1, as agreed at the seventh session of Committee II (see document CoP17 Com. II Rec. 7). [https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/Com\\_II/E-CoP17-Com-II-16.pdf](https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/Com_II/E-CoP17-Com-II-16.pdf). Accessed 10 February 2017.

Emslie RH, Milliken T, Talukdar B, Ellis S, Adcock A, Knight MH (compilers). 2016. African and Asian rhinoceroses—status, conservation and trade. A report from the IUCN Species Survival Commission (IUCN SSC) African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC to the CITES Secretariat pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP15). CoP17, Doc. 68, Annex 5. <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-68-A5.pdf>.

Milliken T, Shaw J. 2012. The South Africa–Viet Nam rhino horn trade nexus: A deadly combination of institutional lapses, corrupt wildlife industry professionals and Asian crime syndicates. TRAFFIC. <http://www.traffic.org/publications/the-south-africa-viet-nam-rhino-horn-trade-nexus-a-deadly-co.html>.

Nellermann C, Henriksen R, Raxter P, Ash N, Mrema E (eds). 2014. The environmental crime crisis—threats to sustainable development from illegal exploitation and trade in wildlife and forest resources. A UNEP Rapid Response Assessment. UNEP and Grid Arendal, Nairobi and Arendal. <https://www.cbd.int/financial/monterreytradetech/unep-illegaltrade.pdf>

TRAFFIC, WWF. 2013. Rhino horn consumers, who are they? <https://www.wwf.de/fileadmin/fm-wwf/Publikationen-PDF/Rhino-horn-consumers--Konsumentenforschung-Nashorn-WWF-TRAFFIC.pdf>. Accessed on 10 February 2017

TRAFFIC. 2016. Change behaviour to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products: workshop proceedings. Traffic Report. <http://www.changewildlifeconsumers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Changing-Behaviour-To-Reduce-Demand-March-2016-Workshop-Proceedings.pdf>